

17.0 GROWTH INDUCING IMPACTS

CEQA requires discussion of the ways in which a proposed project could directly or indirectly foster economic development or population growth, and how that growth would, in turn, affect the surrounding environment. Growth can be induced in a number of ways, including the elimination of obstacles to growth, or through the stimulation of economic activity within the region. Under CEQA, induced growth is not considered necessarily detrimental or beneficial. Induced growth is considered a significant impact only if it directly or indirectly affects the ability of agencies to provide needed public services, if the expected growth inducement directly conflicts with adopted policies limiting growth, or if it can be demonstrated that the potential growth, in some other way, could significantly affect the environment.

17.1.1 Economic or Population Growth

As explained in chapter 2, section 2.2 Purpose and Need, the Lakeville-Sonoma 115 kV Transmission Line project is needed to address voltage instability problems to improve reliability of the transmission system in the Napa-Sonoma area. It also will have the effect of increasing transmission capacity in the area, which could accommodate additional economic or population growth. However, growth in the area is carefully planned and regulated by city and county general plans, which contain land use policies to protect the region's vineyards, open spaces and agricultural traditions and to control urban development.

The project is designed to meet immediate and projected electrical power needs in the Napa-Sonoma service area based on current and projected future demand. Like other utilities and public service providers, PG&E plans and upgrades electrical facilities incrementally based on growth projections provided by local government agencies. These growth projections reflect economic and urban developments that are planned and approved by city and county governments, which have authority over land uses. Local planning policies and zoning regulations have the biggest influence in controlling the pace and ultimate amount of growth in this area. The most relevant policies and regulations that influence growth control in the Napa –Sonoma service area are outlined below:

City of Sonoma

The Community Development Element (Land Use Element) of the General Plan states that, “Sonoma retains its small town feeling by controlling growth and maintaining a tight sphere of influence.” The Community Development Element also identifies buildout capacities which represent the theoretical development capacity of the General Plan. However, the actual rate of growth within the City of Sonoma is controlled by a Growth Management Ordinance, as well as planning and environmental constraints that become known during the planning process. The City's

Growth Management Ordinance, adopted in 1980, limits residential development within the City of Sonoma to an average of 100 units per year.

As required by the General Plan, the City of Sonoma has recently conducted a review of the Growth Management Ordinance and has discussed issues and options associated with potential changes to the ordinance. A revision to the ordinance adopted by the City Council on October 20, 2004, reduces the maximum annual average of allowed development from 100 units per year to 88 units per year, and also provides additional incentives for affordable housing. The revised ordinance states that “a residential growth level averaging 88 dwelling units per year is consistent with the current and projected availability of water and sewer treatment capacity and will result in a reduction in the environmental impacts caused by increased growth” (City of Sonoma 2004).

County of Sonoma

Similarly, water and sewer capacity are among the constraints that limit growth potential in unincorporated Sonoma County, as evidenced in the goals, objectives and policies contained in the existing Sonoma County General Plan. The County of Sonoma is also in the process of updating its general plan. The draft General Plan (General Plan 2020) currently under review considers water and sewer capacity, as well as other constraints that would limit future growth in unincorporated parts of the County.

City of Napa

The City of Napa General Plan (Envision Napa 2020) establishes a Rural/Urban Limit line (RUL), is the City’s urban growth boundary established through City and County policy, and voter-approved initiatives. The RUL has remained in place, virtually unchanged, for more than 20 years, and is intended to define the extent of urban development through the year 2020. A theme running throughout the City of Napa General Plan is the need to conserve and enhance the natural resources, both inside and outside the RUL, which define the City of Napa.

County of Napa

The Napa County General Plan contains a Growth Management System Element, which describes the growth control measures required by Measure A, a Slow Growth Initiative adopted by voters in November 1980. Specifically, the Growth Management System Element describes the 109 dwelling unit annual allocation, the division of the annual allocation into housing type categories, the timing and methods used for issuing building permits, and the required provisions for affordable housing units.

Electricity is not a key factor in land use planning in this area and is not the main obstacle to growth. The availability of electrical capacity by itself does not normally ensure or encourage growth within a particular area. Other factors such as economic conditions, land availability, population trends, and local planning policies have a more direct effect on growth than the availability of services. Sonoma County's General Plan includes the following land use goal:

Goal LU-4.1: Maintain adequate public services in both rural and urban service areas to accommodate projected growth.

The proposed project is consistent with this goal and would accommodate planned growth. It would not be growth inducing. The project will provide short-term construction employment, but no additional permanent workers that would require new housing. Construction will require an average of 20-25 daily workers over a period of about 19 months. PG&E's existing workforce, contractors, and a few other workers from the local labor pool will construct the project. Non-local labor will be used only for specialized skills not readily available locally and would likely stay in hotels or rent housing on a short-term basis. It is not anticipated that the limited, temporary construction employment would result in long-term growth in the area. Therefore, the growth-inducing impact of the proposed substation is less than significant.

The cities and counties of Napa and Sonoma have produced environmental impact reports (EIRs) for their general plans. As the proposed project will accommodate a portion of the build out envisioned by these general plans, the impacts of the growth that the project would serve have already been analyzed in these EIRs.

17.1.2 Extended Access or Public Services

The project facilities are located adjacent to existing streets and utilities. The project will not extend access to previously inaccessible areas or require the extension of other public services to previously unserved areas.

The proposed project will not tax existing community services. The need for city and county-provided services, such as road improvements, law enforcement and fire protection, will be very infrequent, if ever.

17.2 REFERENCES

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